

Ikwerre language

Ikwerre, also spelt as **Ikwere**, is a [language](#) spoken primarily by the [Ikwerre](#) people who inhabit [Rivers State, Nigeria](#).

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Ikwerre	
Pronunciation	[i̥kʷéré]
Native to	Igbo
Region	Ikwerre, Rivers State
Ethnicity	Ikwerre/Igbo
Native speakers	(200,000 cited 1973) ^[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atlantic–Congo ▪ Volta–Niger ▪ Yéai ▪ Igboid ▪ Ikwerre
Dialects	Apara, Ndele, Ogbakiri, Obio, Akpor Alu, Ibaa, Elele ^[2]
Writing system	Latin script
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	ikw
Glottolog	ikwe1242 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/ikwe1242) ^[3]

Classification

The Ikwerre language is classified as an [Igbo dialect](#). The classification of Ikwerre as an Igbo dialect however is a subject of controversy among some in the Ikwerre community due to political reasons. Based on lexicostatistical analysis, [Kay Williamson](#) originally asserted that the Ikwerre, [Ekpeye](#), [Ogba](#), [Etche](#) and [Igbo](#) languages belonged to the same language cluster, but were not dialects.^[4] Subsequent studies by both Williamson and [Roger Blench](#) concluded that Igbo, Ikwerre, Ogba and their sister languages apart from Ekpeye form a "language cluster" and that they are somewhat [mutually intelligible](#).^[5] There are indications that the Ikwerre society was bilingual even in the pre-colonial Nigeria, with people speaking other Igbo dialects and Ikwerre.^[6]

Phonology

Vowels

Ikwerre distinguishes vowels by quality (frontedness and height), the presence or absence of [nasalization](#), and the presence or absence of [advanced tongue root](#).

		Front	Back
High	+ATR	i ī	u ū
	-ATR	ɪ ɿ	ʊ ɿ
Mid	+ATR	e ē	o ɔ̄
	-ATR	ɛ ɛ̄	ɔ ɔ̄
Low	-ATR	a ã̄	

There is also a vowel */ $\tilde{\theta}$ / which is posited to explain syllabic nasal consonants in accounts of the language which state that Ikwerre has no nasal stops. This sound is realized as [$\tilde{\theta}$] or a syllabic nasal which is homorganic to the following consonant.

Vowel harmony

Ikwerre exhibits two kinds of vowel harmony:

1. Every vowel in an Ikwerre word, with a few exceptions, agrees with the other vowels in the word as to the presence or absence of advanced tongue root.
2. Vowels of the same height in adjacent syllables must all be either front or back, i.e. the pairs /i/ & /u/, /ɪ/ & /ʊ/, /e/ & /o/, and /ɛ/ & /ɔ/ cannot occur in adjacent syllables. Vowels of different heights, however, need not match for frontness/backness either. This doesn't apply to the first vowel in nouns beginning with a vowel or with /r/, and doesn't apply to onomatopoeic words.

Consonants

		Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Postalveolar or palatal	Velar		Glottal	
						Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
Plosive or affricate	Voiceless	p		t	tʃ	k	k ^w		
	Voiced	b		d	dʒ	g	g ^w		
Fricative	Voiceless		f	s					
	Voiced		v	z					
Non-plosive stop	Voiced	b~m							
	Glottalized	'b~'m							
Tap				r~r̥					
Approximant				l~n	j~ʒ	ɥ~w̥	w~w̥	h~h̥	h ^w ~h̥ ^w

The oral consonants [b 'b l r j ɥ w h h^w] occur before oral vowels, and their nasal allophones [m 'm n ɾ ʒ ɥ̥ w̥ h̥] before nasal vowels. The "non-explosive stops" [b 'b] are not plosives (not pulmonic), and are equivalent to implosives in other varieties of Igbo.

The tap /r/ may sometimes be realized as an approximant [ɹ].

Tone

Ikwerre is a tonal language.

Agbirigba

Ikwerre has an in-group variant, or cant, Agbirigba, that is meant to prevent understanding by outsiders.

References

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